

Comments from ND Renewable Energy Partnership

For the USDA Farm Bill Listening Session, July 26, 12:00 PM -3:00 PM
North Dakota State Fair - Minot, ND

The North Dakota Renewable Energy Partnership welcomes Secretary Johanns to North Dakota. We welcome this opportunity to address the reauthorization of the Farm Bill.

The North Dakota Renewable Energy Partnership is a coalition of farm groups, rural electric cooperatives, renewable energy entrepreneurs and concerned citizens.

In 2002, for the first time, an Energy Title was added to the Farm Bill. This was a bold and needed step. Rural America can make great contributions to the nation's energy security and to help provide clean energy sources. In the process, developing these energy sources provides economic growth opportunities in rural America.

The Energy Title provides many benefits. The support for biofuels is being felt right here in Minot, where ^{there are} ~~we have~~ exciting ~~new~~ plans for a ~~new~~ biodiesel plant using canola and soy and producing other value-added products. We have great hope for increased ethanol production from a wider array of agricultural products as that technology is further developed.

North Dakota has only begun to enjoy the benefits of the Section 9006 program. Wind power can be a big contributor here, even while we farm the land beneath the turbines. We hope more farmer-owned wind power projects can be financed under this program.

In 2007, we need to grow and strengthen the Energy Title to provide more resources to stimulate this activity around the country. The economic development opportunities ~~from clean energy can~~ ^{by} help the next generation of farmers stay on the land. Diversifying farm income to also include energy products ~~can help farmers~~ become economically resilient. ~~I strongly support this~~

Mr. Secretary, you ask "How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environmental goals?" Enhancing and expanding The Energy Title is key to those efforts. We need to jump-start this industry with support for energy audits, feasibility studies, cost-share for project financing, research for new technology advancement and other incentives to move this nation forward on a clean energy pathway.

You also ask, "How can Federal rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?" Energy Title programs hold great promise to help farmers and rural small businesses to slash energy bills and ~~to~~ build new income opportunities.

You asked, "How should agricultural product development, marketing and research-related issues be addressed in the next farm bill?"

Again, renewable energy from America's farms and rural areas can open new markets for rural America. And these markets are not subject to the rise and fall of commodity prices.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today and for taking the time to listen.

NRA Bill -
RFS 7.5 billion

